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SUBJECT: MALAWI: UDF AND MCP ANNOUNCE ALLIANCE, BUT MULUZI
ROLE UNCLEAR

REF: A. LILONGWE 183
[1](#)B. LILONGWE 156

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Malawi's two leading opposition parties, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) announced their long-anticipated electoral alliance April 8. MCP leader and presidential candidate John Tembo appeared with his counterpart, former president Bakili Muluzi, to brief the press, but offered few details on how they would cooperate. Even the issue of Muluzi's presidential candidacy remains unresolved, and Muluzi said he would continue to pursue a Constitutional Court challenge of his disqualification. On April 7, the Constitutional Court dismissed former President Muluzi's challenge of the Malawi Electoral Commission's (MEC) decision to bar him from contesting in May's presidential election (ref B) based on technicalities. Muluzi's lawyers initially indicated that they would refile the case on April 8, but failed to do so. Muluzi said that a technical committee was finalizing the alliance agreement. President Mutharika was unconcerned by the announcement, telling a rally that adding zero to zero still gives you zero, but Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Secretary General Henry Chimunthu-Banda was dispatched to Blantyre to develop a political response. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) On April 8, MCP leader John Tembo and other party leaders traveled to Blantyre to meet with Muluzi at his residence. After their meeting, the two leaders appeared before journalists to announce they had reached an agreement to form an election coalition, but provided no details about how the alliance would work. Muluzi told the press that despite the alliance, he would continue to challenge the MEC's ruling in court. He also said that a technical committee was finalizing the details of the alliance which would be announced later.

[1](#)3. (U) The Constitutional Court had on April 7 dismissed the case former President Bakili Muluzi had brought against the MEC. Muluzi had challenged the MEC decision declaring him ineligible to stand as a presidential candidate in the May 19 elections. In the ruling, the Court said that Muluzi had commenced proceedings improperly by originating a summons instead of a motion. The Court also said Muluzi has sued the wrong party by suing the "Malawi Electoral Commission" instead of just the "Electoral Commission". Muluzi's lawyers said they would refile the case on April 8, but failed to do so.

[1](#)4. (SBU) President Mutharika was unconcerned about the alliance announcement. In a rally in Lilongwe, Mutharika compared a Muluzi-Tembo alliance to adding zero to zero. Mutharika's running mate, Joyce Banda, said that Tembo was disgracing former president and MCP founder Kamuzu Banda by associating with Muluzi, who looked up Banda in his old age. DPP Secretary General Henry Chimunthu-Banda asked Muluzi to

apologize to the nation for wasting its time with his attempts for a third term. Despite the public bravado, the DPP dispatched Chimunthu-Banda to Blantyre to assess the situation and formulate a political response.

15. (SBU) Comment: The alliance between Tembo and Muluzi has long been expected (REF A) and signals that Muluzi believes he will not be declared eligible to stand. While details have not been released, we expect that Muluzi will ultimately support the Tembo-Mpinganjira ticket in exchange for the inclusion of a significant proportion of UDF members in the Cabinet. It is unlikely that either party will withdraw parliamentary candidates in constituencies where the parties are competing head-to-head. If Muluzi can deliver votes in Southern Malawi, the alliance makes Tembo a very formidable opponent for President Mutharika. It also offers Muluzi several advantages, including the ability to maintain control of the UDF party, rather than having to compete with a new UDF presidential candidate for influence. The agreement will also keep the UDF in several high-profile government positions. Finally, an appreciative Tembo is far less likely to pursue corruption and other cases against Muluzi and the UDF. End Comment.
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